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As is always the case with men of such strong will as he possessed, he was not always understood, his marked peculiarities often concealing his real worth. Beneath his exterior, so often brusque, he had a kind heart. Especially was he averse to all ceremony and pretension, and singularly opposed to anything which tended to make him personally prominent.

His last illness was long and painful, though undergone without complaint; he only wished for death. Almost the last words, found among his papers, were the following: "I have passed a pleasant day, and the night has overtaken me by the wayside. Let me rest in its kind enfoldments."

## ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF SORGHUM BY SEED SELECTION.

BY G. H. FAILEYER AND J. T. WILLARD, STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE.

The experiments reported upon are those conducted by the chemical department of the Agricultural College Experiment Station. The full accounts of this work, which extends over five years, may be found in the reports and bulletins of the station. The work may be briefly outlined, as follows:

1. The object of the experiment is to improve our best varieties of sorghum by propagating only from the best stalks.
2. Which are the best stalks is determined in the only way possible, viz., by analysis of the juice of single stalks. In this way the most superior seed tops from among several hundred single plants can be selected.
3. Seed from the best seed tops so obtained is planted the next year, and selections are again made as before, and so on year after year.
4. A large, but gradual, increase in sugar content has been observed during the five years that the experiment has been in progress. Part of this improvement may be due to acclimatization, but the writers think that no reasonable doubt can be entertained that the seed selection has been a very important factor in the improvement.

## A VARIETY OF AMPELOPSIS QUINQUEFOLIA.

BY E. B. KNERR, ATCHISON.

So far as I have been able to ascertain, the botanists fail to notice and describe a variety of the Virginia creeper, *Ampelopsis quinquefolia* Michx., in which characteristic points of difference from the typical species are quite marked.

In the first place, the habit of growth is quite different. As is commonly known, the true species climbs by clinging very closely to its support, whether that be a tree or a wall. The variety does not cling so closely to its support; in fact, it is impossible for it to climb a wall or a tree trunk, unless the bark of the tree be very rough, owing to the structure of its tendrils. It climbs rather like the grape and the clematis, by trailing over low shrubbery to that which is higher, until it may reach the lower branches of a tree, when it may rise to a considerable height by reaching from branch to branch, rather than by clinging close to the body of the tree and larger branches. Sometimes, in transplanting the Virginia creeper, this variety is hit upon, and people wonder why it fails to cling to the side of the house. If the tendrils be examined, they will be found to be more like grape tendrils, long, curling, and grasping by recurved tips, rather than short, digitate, and clinging by disk-like expan-

sions, as in the case of the typical species. The leaves also differ quite perceptibly, being much larger for the same age in the variation, and having larger petioles, both for the leaf proper and for the leaflets. The margins are more strongly serrate, tending to double serrate. The internodes of the stem are much longer in the variety, causing the leaves to be fewer and more scattered. The nodes are more swollen, as are the leaf petioles at the base, making a much larger leaf scar, but the axillary buds are smaller. The stem of the type species is quite rough, furrowed, and warty, especially as it grows older, while the variety is much smoother. The fruit of the variety is more abundant, berries larger, and in more open corymbs.

In short, the whole aspect of the variety is more grape-like, and for this reason we suggest the name *A. quinquefolia*, var. *vitacea*.

## NOTES ON "MOUNTAIN LEATHER," FROM RED ROCK CAÑON, COLORADO.

BY E. B. KNEER.

The red sandstone of the Red Rock Cañon, Colorado, along the Colorado Midland railroad, is extensively quarried for building purposes. In the seams and joints of this rock may be found a tenacious asbestos or paper-like mineral, known as "mountain leather." When the seam is large, allowing of a thicker deposit, the mineral is rather spongy, and is then known as "mountain cork." An analysis of the mineral gave the composition as follows:

SiO <sub>2</sub> .....	59.02
Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> .....	8.51
MgO.....	9.57
K <sub>2</sub> O.....	.81
Na <sub>2</sub> O.....	4.28
H <sub>2</sub> O.....	18.21
	<hr/>
	100.40

## RECENT ADVANCES IN THE STUDY OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.

BY C. JUDSON HERRICK, OTTAWA.

The past decade has been a period of unparalleled activity in the study of the nervous system, both human and comparative. Investigation has appreciated more and more the value of the latter method. The points mentioned in this brief review are almost all the direct outgrowths of improved histological and embryological methods.

One of the most valuable results of these studies has been the establishment of safe homologies through the entire series of vertebrates, from the fish to man. The commissures have naturally received especial attention. The callosum, formerly supposed to belong exclusively to the higher mammals, has, in recent years, been found by various observers in the kangaroo, a few birds, serpents, and batrachians. About two years ago, it was found by my brother in the alligator,\* and by him last year in the opossum, strongly developed.† Last winter, in working up material col-

\* Notes on the Brain of the Alligator, by C. L. Herrick, Journal of Cincinnati Society of Natural History, 1890.

† Journal of Comparative Neurology, February, 1892.